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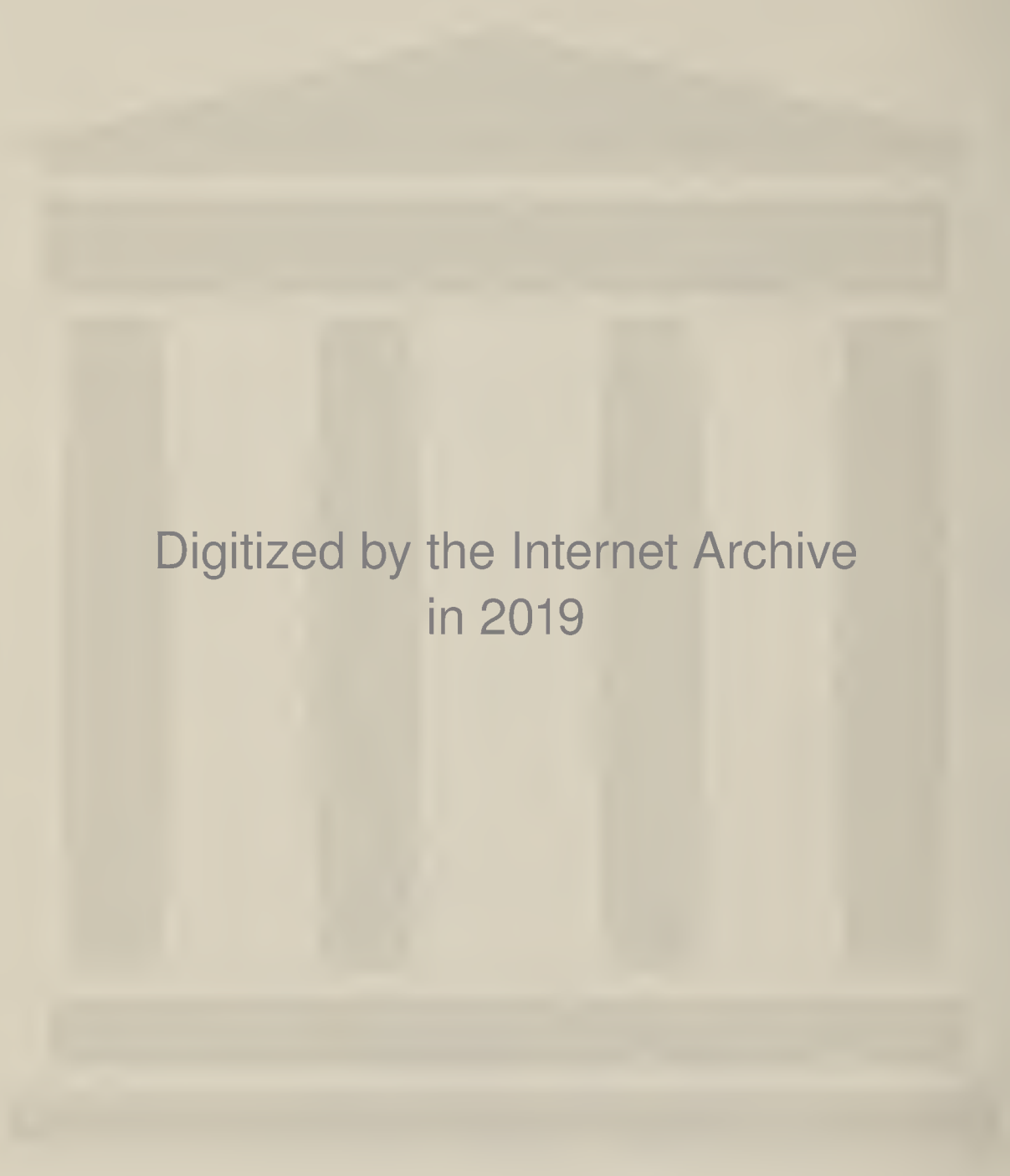
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HISTORY OF IRASBURGH

TO 1856

ANONYMOUS

Extract from Vermont  
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1930





NEW SERIES

1930

VOL. I No. 3

# PROCEEDINGS OF THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## A HISTORY OF IRASBURGH

TO 1856

ANONYMOUS

*This account of the town which Ira Allen presented to his bride, Jerusha Enos, as a marriage settlement, is contained in a manuscript never before published, in the archives of the Vermont Historical Society. From internal evidence it is clear that the account was written in 1856, probably to be read before the "Natural and Civil History Society for Orleans County" of which mention is made elsewhere in this issue. There is no indication as to the author. The most unusual feature of the town's history is the fact that the land remained so long in the possession of the family of Ira Allen, under a system of leasing which resembled the English landlord and tenant system. This was, of course, a mere fraction of the vast landed estates of the Allen family in Vermont. and it is the only instance in which their leasing policy persisted. When this account was written, Kansas and the slavery question were uppermost in people's minds. Reference to The War means the War of 1812. Smuggling at the time of that war, and the embargo which preceded it, remind one of similar difficulties along the border at present.*

**A**N Eminent Divine, a very godly man, on entering his room called for the newspaper, saying "I want to see how God is governing this world. His mind had been so directed that in the various events of the day he saw the continued providence of God. As it is so, the various scenes of life, the events occurring



in a nation's progress are but the delineation of the providence of God in the ages that are passing by, and history is the record of his progressive government.

For the Christian therefor history must be important for it shows God in his works. Not less for the statesman than the Christian is history necessary. It shows him not only how God governs the world, but also what effects may be expected from certain causes. Under the same circumstances the same causes will produce the same results almost as certainly as the centrifugal and the centripetal forces hold the planetary system in its accustomed place and propel it onward around its great center. For future guidance every nation should have the history of its past career carefully and faithfully written: and the same rule may apply to states, and even to towns. To arrive at the greatest usefulness every statesman, yea, every man, should be an historian.

Within a short time some interest has been awakened to compile the early history of our towns, from the generation that is now passing away. And we must conclude that this labor is important if it be for no other purpose than just to teach the present generation the hardships and toils of the past.

For this purpose a society has been organized in this as in other counties, and, urged by that society, rather than invited by the inhabitants, I have with some labor made out a brief but crude account of Irasburgh.

Up to the close of the last century this was nothing but an unbroken wilderness. And unless it had been traversed by some of the expeditions sent by England or the Colonies via the Canadas this wilderness had not been visited by the feet of a whiteman. The red man with his tomahawk and bow and arrows alone disputed with wild beasts for the supremacy of the forests of Irasburgh. True, from the discovery of a shirt of mail, a description of which will be given before I close, it has been conjectured that an expedition headed by Major Rogers of New Hampshire passed this way. This expedition was fitted out by Gen. Amherst then the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in America, for the purpose of destroying a village of St. Francis Indians on the south side of St. Lawrence river not far from Three Rivers.



Rogers embarked at Crown Point, Sept. 12, 1759, in batteaux, and landed at Missisco Bay with 142 men. Leaving his boats concealed by bushes and two men to watch them, he pushed on for St. Francis. The second evening after he left the bay his rangers overtook him and informed him that his boats had been taken by 400 French and Indians. Keeping this information to himself, he sent a few men to notify Gen. Amherst of their condition, urging him to send provisions from No. 4 to Coos on Connecticut River, intimating his determination to return that way. He was completely successful in surprising the village of St. Francis, and finding several hundred scalps. His men were so incensed that they massacred all sexes and ages; and burnt the village utterly. Out of 300 residents, 200 were slain on the spot and 20 taken prisoners. Rogers then started up the St. Francis for Coos through this county, and from this shirt of mail alluded to, and some things found at other places, it has been supposed he passed through this town. Charlestown fitted out several boats, and sent up provisions under Sam Stevens and three others. They landed at Round Island at the mouth of Passumpsic river. But the next morning hearing the report of fire arms they reembarked fearing Indians, and moved down the river. Soon after, Rogers arrived. Seeing the fire, but finding no provisions, many of his men died of grief and privation. He subsequently reached Charlestown having lost 49 men. With this exception no white man's foot had broken these solitudes till a much later day.

Irasburgh was chartered by the Legislature of Vermont to Ira Allen and sixty-two associates February 23, A. D. 1781. From its principle proprietor, Ira Allen, it was called Irasburgh in the grant, and previously to 1790 the other proprietors deeded their rights to Mr. Allen for a nominal consideration, showing that he was the real proprietor at the first and that his associates stood then simply for convenience.

It is bounded Northerly by Coventry, Easterly by Benton, and a small part of Brownington, Southerly by Albany, and Westerly by Lowell, Coventry gore and a small part of Newport and contained originally 23040 acres. In 1793 a survey and division of the town was made by James Whitlaw. Still there was no inhabitant of all this beautiful territory, and the earth enjoyed its repose.



In 1798 Mr. Caleb Leach came into the town, then an unbroken wilderness and became the first actual settler. He came in March, and transported his effects, not on a railroad car nor on a job wagon, or a sleigh nor even an ox sled, but on a simple handsled which seems to have been the principle vehicle for those times even in other towns. He pitched his log cabin in the East part of the town on lot No. 108. To him was born the first child in town. After him came various individuals whose names appear on the record. Their residences I have been unable to locate. Among them were Foster Page, James Leach, and Simon French, all of whom signed the petition for the organization of the town in 1803.

Prior to October, 1802, James and John Richardson settled on the farm now owned and occupied by Mr. Amos Chaument[?] and one of them kept the first tavern in town. It stood at the four corners of roads running from Barton to Coventry, and from Glover to Brownington, and came to be a considerable stopping place in time of the embargo and the War of 1812. It is related that at that time on a certain evening forty span of horses meeting from opposite directions put up at this house, on the hill. Soon after Mr. Leach, Mr. Amos Conant came in, and to him was given the first lease recorded on the book of records, bearing date August 4, A. D. 1802. He located on the road to Barton Landing on the farm now occupied by Mr. Rufus Edmonds.

About the same time Mr. Jeremiah Morrill settled on the hill, north from the village, on the farm now owned by Mr. Spencer D. Howard and from him that locality received the name of Morrill hill which it has ever since borne. Mr. Morrill was reputed a mighty hunter and sought with his rifle the noble moose, which was at that early day very common in this new region. Many interesting stories of his prowess as a hunter are related, which I have not time to repeat here.

Among the first inhabitants was Mr. Levi Sylvester who settled on the farm now occupied by Mr. William S. Flint. At his house emigrants found a genial hospitality. Indeed that attribute attaches itself to the pioneers of all new regions. They are more sympathetically hospitable than the same men will be when the country is older. Pioneer life is well calculated to bring out the kinder affections of our nature. Mr. Benjamin Hardy a Rev-



olutionary soldier was also among the first arrivals in Irasburgh. He settled on a farm now owned by Mr. Henry Summers. He was for many years one of the selectmen of the town holding the office almost by possession.

The same year of Jeremiah Morrill's arrival came in Jeremiah Morrill, Jr. and Philip Morrill, both of whom also settled on Morrill Hill, near Mr. Jeremiah Morrill, Philip Morrill where Mr. Emerson now lives. Soon after, and before 1802, Mr. Benjamin Burton moved to Irasburgh and settled on a hill south of the village on a farm now occupied by Mr. Larabee, which has from him continued to bear the name of Burton Hill until this day. In 1804 Mr. Ralph Parker put up a saw and grist mill for the accommodation of this region. It stood near where the present grist mill owned by Mr. Ira H. Allen now stands. In consideration he received a deed of one hundred acres of land including the site of the present village, which was then almost an unbroken forest. In that deed, which was dated A. D. 1805, a proviso was inserted that if this town should ever become a county town no public buildings should be erected on this lot, or if they were, Mr. Parker was bound to exchange this lot for other lands of equal value in some other part of Irasburgh. A provision which eleven years after went into effect.

A year or two after the erection of these mills, Mr. Eben Burton built a hotel and put up a small store which he occupied for a limited time, being the first merchant of Irasburgh.

Nathaniel Kellam and a large family of boys came in, in 1805, and settled on the farm now owned by John H. Keller[?] The father subsequently became deacon of the Baptist Church and had a high reputation for eloquence and ability in prayer. When volunteers marched to Troy in time of the war, entirely unknown to him some one in the secret made a bet of three dollars and eight gallons of whiskey that he would offer a better prayer than the Chaplain sent on by the authorities. The opportunity soon offered and the praying made. It is unnecessary to add that the Deacon won with *ease*. At that early day the road (such as it was) generally passed from hill to hill. Coming from Glover one led over Burton hill, past the place owned by Hubbard Hastings down Morrill hill to Coventry. Their engineers seemed to think the highest ground the best for the transportation of their commodities. And when they moved on hand-



sled, a mode of locomotion rather slow, they had this advantage, that when they arrived at the top of the hill they could get upon their load and slide down the other side.

The first meeting of the proprietors of Irasburgh was held at the dwelling house of Ralph Parker, Esq. in Glover, November 12, 1801. Mr. Parker was chosen Moderator and Heman Allen Proprietors' Clerk; and the meeting was adjourned to the last Monday of December following. Agreeable to this adjournment they met at the same place on the 28th of December, 1801, at which time the proprietors voted to accept the survey and division made by James Whitlaw in the year 1793, and establish it as the permanent division of the town. To defray the expenses of that survey and some other outgos they voted a tax \$6.25 on each proprietor's share, and elected Roger Enos, Jr., collector. As the taxes were not paid, the town, or that part of it owned by delinquents, was advertised for sale at public vendue, to take place the 4th of March, 1803. The sale coming on, it appears from the record that the proprietors were all in default, for the record stands thus:

"Glover 4th March 1803

Then opened the vendue for the sale of the delinquent rights in Irasburgh agreeable to the foregoing advertisement, & after selling *all* the lands in sd town (public rights excepted) adjourned the same to the 5th Instant at 8 o'clock in the forenoon at this place attest

Roger Enos Junior Collector"

Mr. Heman Allen was the sole purchaser and the whole was deeded to him accordingly. As some informality crept in to the proceedings, the legislature, on the 27th day of October, 1804, passed a "special act enabling the proprietors of Irasburgh to ratify and confirm their former proceedings." Agreeable to this law the proprietors met at the dwelling house of Amos Conant, Esq. in sd. town on the sd. day of June, A. D. 1806, and after choosing by ballot Ralph Parker, Moderator, and Amos Conant, Proprietors' Clerk, they proceeded to ratify their former (agreeable to Pact) proceedings, and establish the sale, and transfer of all the lands in the town agreeable to sd. vendue," and Heman Allen became sole proprietor of all the lands in sd. township, doubtless holding under Jerusha Allen, the wife of Ira Allen, for whom he acted.



The last division of the town took place A. D. 1807, and the return was made and recorded February 9, A. D. 1807. February 13th, 1803, a petition was made signed by names heretofore enumerated and addressed to Amos Conant, Esq., Justice of the Peace, for an organization of the town. March 12, 1803, the town was organized, agreeable to the petition. Amos Conant was the first town Clerk, and his son Samuel Conant the first Constable.

As before said, Caleb Leach was the "*first settler*" and as a consideration received the gift of one half of lot No. 108, lying in the east part of the town, now owned by Mr. Hiram Kellam. Mr. Leach was something of a man in the estimation of his fellow pioneers, and was chosen first selectman, on the organization of the Town, —and he was continued in that office the two following years. He was again chosen selectman in 1807, and this year represented the town, being the first representative ever sent from Irasburgh. He was continued in the same offices the year ensuing and filled other offices subsequently. Gathering ideas from the records, Mr. Leach appears to have been a man of good character, and fair influence and ability. He continued in town, holding various offices and prosecuting his business until after the war. Becoming somehow involved in the disputes or combinations which grew up along the border, he finally sold out and left town about the close of the war. And what has been said of his character, was also, to a good degree true of the other "first settlers" of the town. The first lease recorded was given to Amos Conant, who was the first Justice of Peace and the first Town Clerk, and held these offices or one of them for many years after, showing that he was a man of good character as well as of fair intelligence and influence. His son, Samuel Conant, who, Mr. Thompson erroneously informs us, was the first town Clerk, was the first constable of the town, and was a man of high respectability, and fair influence up to the time of his leaving, which was the fore part of last year. He is now a resident of Jamesville, Wisconsin and is much missed in town, although he was *never* town Clerk. Such appears to have been the prevailing spirit and character of the primitive inhabitants of Irasburgh. They were strong men, and had many excellent traits of character. Men hardy and robust, they partook largely of the characteristics of pioneers of a new settlement, enduring hardships and



privations which would appall many of their successors on the same soil, extending to others all those acts of kindness that are so becoming to good citizens. There may have been some exceptions, but on the whole the primitive inhabitants of Irasburgh were worthy men. But in the time of the war it is said there came in a set of men, who might well be denominated forerunners of the "Border ruffians of Kansas" who considered it fair and right in those rude times to seize upon whatsoever was valuable and appropriate it to their own use, in absence of the owner. As for timber, even the best of pine was taken as lawful plunder and appropriated for the benefit of whoever could use it at home or draw it to the mill, and as there were good choppers in those days one family has been mentioned who were so reckless that they would cut down the largest pines just for the fun of seeing them fall.

Such being their loose notions of morality it is not strange that they came to be looked upon as a kind of squatter sovereigns and to be considered Ishmaelites, whose hands were against every man and every man's hand against them, and to be a terror to the whole region. And it is further said that, when any thing particularly bad was done in the neighborhood, when their reputation was known, it was common to say "That's another Irasburgh scrape." Yet this bad odor which attached itself to some of the inhabitants was not really characteristic of the town in general, but rather of an organization that went together as a Club and made their forays abroad, creating terror and disgust amongst those who knew them. And this may have arisen in part from the fact that a Customs house officer was stationed here to prevent smuggling, and many attached themselves to him, claiming to be good whigs whose business it was to look to the Tories, who it was known would aid the enemy with their cattle and produce if they could. And many also claimed to act as officers, who had really no authority but their own passions or pleasures, and this became a lively type of the "Territorial Militia" of Kansas at a much later day.

But if they were a terror to the peaceable inhabitants they were not less so to the smugglers, whose road to Canada lay in this direction. Of all things, it is said, they feared the Irasburgh organization. Scores of anecdotes are told of their operations with this class of men.



It would seem that there was a fair share of honest love of country, and that not much could be laid against them as giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Much allowance must be made for the day in which they lived. They were here, just on the borders of the State, and a state of war will always produce demoralizing results in such localities. Men become reckless of life in their border forays, and they naturally and easily lose the nice distinctions of property and private rights of individuals, especially where the exposed family is somewhat suspected of disloyalty to the cause.

We need to live in Kansas to appreciate or even understand charitably the proceedings of some there who are reputed good men. And we should go back to those days of trial, to learn all the influences brought to bear upon these people then entitled the "Irasburgh Gang." In this view future generations often have to be generous to the infirmities or the irregularities of the past.

If not left by the expedition already alluded to, it was perhaps in some of these forays that the "shirt of mail," found by Shubael Goodell in the west part of the town, fifteen years after the war closed, was left by someone who had disincumbered himself of its protection, that he might travel, or flee with greater facility. Sitting down there to rest, he was, perhaps, destroyed by wild beasts, and his protecting garment left. I find the description in the Independent Standard, December 5, and shall venture to insert it here as the editor has it.

"This curious relic was discovered by Shubael Goodell in the west part of this town in the spring of 1827. It was rolled together and lying at the foot of a large birch tree, between two considerable roots. The story goes that Mr. Goodell, at work near by, set down his jug upon this very relic, and that when he again took up his drink, he heard the jingle or saw the chains which, on further examination proved to be a regular shirt of mail, no doubt of European manufacture. The upper part was made of iron or steel, after the manner of steel money purses, but much thicker, with rings about one fourth of an inch in diameter, and the lower part was made in the same manner, of gilt or brass wire, the shoulders of double thickness. It was evidently well calculated to protect the wearer about the body and shoulders against the arrows or spears of an enemy. When found it was



much corroded with rust, but retained its entire shape, although giving evidence of having lain there a long time. It was subsequently purchased by Lieut. Wilson of the U. S. Artillery, for the purpose of being deposited in the National Museum at Washington. What a host of curious conjecture clustered around this ancient relic! Did some wanderer, long, long ago, lost, benighted in the wilderness, sit down there to rest, and then, frightened by a savage, or wild beast, fly and leave it behind him? Or did some savage after having taken it from his victim as a trophy, tire of carrying his prize, lay it down there to abandon it, or to be recovered at some future time? Could that shirt of mail speak, what a history it would open up to us." (Note: It is said now to be in the Peels Museum, Philadelphia).

There were doubtless many interesting events connected with the first settlement of Irasburgh, not, however different to any great extent from those which accompanied the settlement of all our towns. And, as the original settlers are now all gone it is difficult to gather up even what incidents there were. On the day of the Battle of Plattsburgh a meeting was held at the usual place where reading meetings were held, a school house near Mr. Ira Allen's. The two deacons had commenced meeting as usual, prayers had been offered, and singing, when the sound of the cannons was heard. At this, the people left the house and went out upon the hills near, and sat there listening to the booming of the guns till about 3 o'clock P. M. when they went home filled with lively anxiety as to the result. (It is said also that two of the prayers offered were on the opposite side of the question.) Before dark the next day a horseman came into town entirely unknown, rode up to the farm houses, and reported that McDonough was victorious on the Lake, and the British were driven out of Plattsburgh. He then passed on without giving his name and no one knew how far he had ridden or where he stopped for the night. By the regular course of mail and telegraph it would take longer for the news to come from Plattsburgh now.

This leads me to the interesting fact that victories were heard of in remote localities in a very short period of time even long before there were regular means of communication as at this day.



Two days after the battle of Quatre Bras, when Napoleon drove Blucher back upon Wavre, previous to Waterloo, the natives of India opposed to the British forces there, had heard that Napoleon had been victorious over the Allies. The news had been telegraphed in their own way, and was true so far as that the Austrians were driven back.

Up to the spring of 1809, the inhabitants of Irasburgh had depended upon Craftsbury and neighboring towns for a physician. In March of that year, Dr. John Woodman, brother of a Mr. Woodman now living in Barton, came in here and was the first physician of Irasburgh. He did not remain however for any great length of time, and was succeeded by others.

The same may be said of the law, even a little later. Salmon Nye, admitted to the bar March, 1817, was the first lawyer who settled here, commencing his practice in this place which he had previously made his home. The people of enterprise and thrift did not neglect one kind of spirituality. For at the close of the war, or soon after, there were no less than *five* whiskey distilleries within the limits of the town.

Irassburgh became the shire town of Orleans County, A. D. 1816. Previous to that date, courts had been held alternately at Brownington and Craftsbury, which were half shire towns. But Mr. Ira H. Allen and his mother, who were the principal proprietors of the town, were able about this time to make arrangements with the county so that this, the central town in the county, should become its capital, the Allens giving the site for county buildings and also being at the expense, or the principal expense of their erection. The first court was held here August 1816. Considerable opposition however was raised against the arrangement by the rival towns, some of the people going so far as to threaten to prevent the session of the court at Irassburgh even if they had to resort to force. But this fierce opposition soon died away and the people very happily came to the wise conclusion that as this was the center of the county, it was the best location that could be selected for the capital. From that time business has progressed favorably, although in consequence of the prejudice existing in the minds of many from the fact that some of its lands are under lease, it has not made such rapid progress as, with its facilities and advantages, it otherwise would. Black River runs through the town in a northeasterly



direction, and on it there are, at the village, several valuable water privileges, but partially improved. The valley of the river furnishes a large tract of excellent intervails, and it is thought by many that the soil of the township and other advantages will compare favorably with any other town in the county. For agricultural purposes it has few superiors in the State.

The Congregational church was organized in January, 1818, by the Rev. James Hobart, Missionary, and the Rev. Luther Leland, of Derby. It was composed then of only 8 members, 3 males and 5 females; its first deacon was Zadock Bloss. The first settled minister in town was the Rev. James Johnson, Congregationalist, who was installed February 13, A. D. 1839. The first general revival of religion was in 1827. In the spring of that year three sudden deaths, in the vicinity, two suicides, and one death in his chair, awakened an unusual seriousness in the community. Meetings were more frequently held, Elders Ide and Cheney of the Baptist Church and others of other demoninations were called in, and the work progressed, extending into all parts of the town. June training approached, a day formerly given up to drinking and rioting. Much anxiety rested upon the minds of Christians as to the effect of the day upon seriousness, as they were then in the midst of the revival. The day arrived and as one of the principal officers had just obtained hope it was proposed to hear prayers. The Company was formed into a hollow square, and the two deacons offered up their heartfelt prayers. Astonishment seemed to sit upon the faces of that part of the company to which such a scene was new. In the forenoon they went through with their review with much solemnity, but the afternoon was turned into a religious meeting at the court house. Meetings were also held in other parts of the town on the same day, and as a result it appeared that this June training was the day of New Birth of *16 individuals*. In that revival about 80 obtained hope, most of whom gave good evidence of the genuineness of the work in their subsequent life. The Baptist Church was organized later, October 26, 1816. Composed of sixteen members, its first Deacon was Nathaniel Killam, but for many years they were destitute of any regular preaching. Deacon Bloss and Deacon Killam jointly officiated, one being the superior reader and the other excelling



in prayer, and they occupied according to their respective gifts and were instrumental in doing much good in those primitive ages of the church. One of them was Baptist, the other Congregational, and their united labors were a bright and profitable example of that unity and brotherly kindness which should ever characterize the followers of him whose they professed to be.

As Mr. Johnson was the first settled minister, the right of land reserved by the grant would necessarily have passed to him by the charter. Consequently there was considerable excitement in connection with his installation. Committees were appointed and arrangements made by which the people understood that Mr. Johnson agreed to relinquish his right to the support of preaching in town. But after his dismission he commenced an action to recover the right himself. The suit had various fortunes, alternating between the parties, first towards this Town and then towards the claimant until it was finally arranged by paying Mr. Johnson a sum of money and his giving a quit claim of the entire right to the town. It is said that very few of these rights granted to the first settled ministers in the various towns were ever beneficial either to the ministry or the Church.

The churches in Irasburgh have had a chequered history. At one time prosperous and flourishing; and then cold and declining. At the present time the Methodist Church is quite low, having no stationed preacher; the Congregational Church numbers not one third so many as it has in some former times, although it is even at that, more prosperous than either of the others. Perhaps the Church members too will charge their want of success and spirituality to "lease land." Certain it is that for some cause, the Churches are very cold and low, giving promise of the opposite of prosperity and success. They have their comfortable and convenient houses of worship but the occupants are few. I have occupied much of your time, but bear with me for a moment while I give a short notice of the public press in Irasburgh.

The Yeomans Record published and edited by E. Rawson was established in the fall of 1845, and ran about three years when it passed into the hands of A. G. Conant who published it less than a year, when it was attached for debt and was consigned to William H. Rand, and afterwards passed back into the hands of E. Rawson who continued to publish it till the spring of



1850 when it died. In May of the same year Mr. L. B. Jameson, now of Chicago, Ill., started the Orleans County Gazette, edited by his brother, John A. Jameson, now also of Chicago. The Gazette was considerably larger than the Record, and was much better conducted. The highest number of subscribers at one time was 700. It was published by Jameson three years, when it was sold to James M. Dana, now of Montpelier. He published it three years when it was nearly run out. It then passed into the hands of G. W. Hartshorn who enlarged it and published it about eight months, and from him it passed into the hands of Sylvester Howard, Jr., who took a partner and published it under the editorship of Howard & Morris and sold out to the North Union. The first of January, 1856, the Independent Standard edited and published by Mr. A. A. Earle, commenced its career and is now thought to be firmly established, circulating over 1100 copies. It may not be improper briefly to speak of the history and present condition of the lease lands difficulty of Irasburgh in this connection. In doing so I shall be obliged to go back in history. The State of Vermont had something of a Kansas history in its early stages. Much of it was chartered by Governor Wentworth of New Hampshire under implied permission (or supposed permission) from the British Crown. Claiming similar rights and perhaps equally entitled to them, New York also chartered a large portion of the townships of the state, and as a consequence these charters, some of them, covered the same territory. And, as each claimed the title, each undertook to exercise jurisdiction. Hence frequent conflicts ensued. But the people becoming disgusted with the opposing interests, cast off the authority of both claimants and set up for themselves. Their principle difficulty however seemed to be with New York in whose favor the home government finally decided. Between them and New Hampshire was a better understanding. But they came to be a community independent of both belligerent states, and men, as the event proved, both able and willing to take care of themselves. From the ranges of mountains running through the disputed territory, which came near being the center of their operations, they received the name, famous through all the nation, and even in England and Europe, of the "Green Mountain Boys." And their independent mode of life well fitted them to be the most sagacious, hardy, and brave people on the



continent. Compelled to defend themselves against the New York authorities, they resorted to various means to worry out and drive off their foes, many of which were novel in their character and extremely picturesque in their application. The most prominent mark which they applied to the officers and minions of York was denominated by them "The Beech Seal" a mode of marking which would have done well for the free state men in Kansas to apply to Missourians, had not the latter been upheld by the U. S. Army, and whole power of the President. The first victory gained by the Americans after Lexington was achieved by the "Green Mountain Boys" under Ethan Allen at Ticonderoga and shows that these so called outlaws were still loyal to their country. The victory of Stark and Warner at Bennington by the same Green Mountain Boys turned the scale against Burgoyne, who surrendered at Saratoga. It would not be difficult to trace these victories by the line of light to those very conflicts with the Yorkers, those hardy times which tried these sons of New England and strengthened them as the oak, standing in the open field by its conflict with the elements is made more solid than that grown in the forest where the wind of heaven does not blow upon it too roughly. And through these victories, it is not fanciful to *trace the final success of the Colonies*. But as the territory was neither under New York nor New Hampshire; nor had a recognized Colonial existence of its own, it did not seem to come into the general plan of government and was unable to depend upon the Continental Congress for defence against the common enemy.

It was also exposed to the Canadians all along its northern frontier, and lying on Lake Champlain, which was then in the hands of the enemy, its condition was extremely exposed and critical. In view of this fact, although the people were as brave and powerful as any equal number under heaven, to undertake to defend themselves against Great Britain single handed, would have been nothing but the extreme of rashness. Learning that the enemy had collected an army of 10,000 men in Canada with which to subdue them, the "Committee of safety" as also the recognized authorities of the state resorted to diplomacy. They undertook to secure that peace and safety by finesse that they despaired of obtaining by force. A hope entertained by the commanders of the British forces in Canada that they should be



able to detach Vermont from the American cause and join it to the interests of the crown favored their designs.

During the spring of 1780, some of the scouting parties of the northern frontier had fallen into the hands of the British, and as a large number of the enemy had previously fallen into the hands of Vermont, Colonel Ira Allen and Major Joseph Fay were commissioned by Governor Chittenden to negotiate for an exchange of prisoners. Their mission was entirely successful and the British seized their visit as a favorable opportunity of entering upon their proposed negotiations for the surrender of Vermont to the crown.

In this negotiation Ira Allen proved more than a match for the British agents in the subtle science of diplomacy, and so successfully did he manage the matter that the enemy, highly elated, imagined themselves sure of a successful issue. In 1781, Colonel Allen was once more appointed to settle a cartel with the British for another exchange of prisoners, this time fully understanding what would be expected of him by the governor of Vermont as well as proposed by the enemy. In the conference, although he made no promises, yet he acknowledged that Vermont had become somewhat cold in her zeal for the cause, fearing that the success of the Americans would once more subject them to the jurisdiction of New York, against whom they had become greatly exasperated and whose control they "considered the most detestable in the known world." Rather than submit to New York they would prefer to remain an independent Colony under the protection of the British Crown. With these professions and assurances the British agents were highly elated, and their hopes of success were much increased and strengthened. But it would be tedious and perhaps out of place to follow the whole history of this transaction to its termination.

Suffice it to say that by these means the enemy were kept from any open invasion, hoping through the instrumentality of some of the principal citizens of Vermont to accomplish their object by more peaceable means. And thus they continued to labor to detach Vermont from the American cause and the agents of Vermont to hold out encouraging but evasive answers until the very close of the war. Thus Vermont was saved a vast amount of expenditure and probably of blood.



In all these transactions Ira Allen acted a prominent if not the principal part. And for his services and expenditures from time to time he received from the legislature of the state several large grants of land, among which was Irasburgh. Eight years after the grant, or in 1789, he deeded Irasburgh to Jerusha Enos, a daughter of General Enos, as a marriage settlement, agreeable to English usage, and she became his wife. Subsequent events proved that this disposal of the town was exceedingly fortunate for the family. Colonel Allen was made Major General of Vermont after its admission into the union. The inhabitants being at this time almost destitute of arms, he refused to review the militia until an attempt had been made to supply them. Being in possession of large landed property and of a very energetic and fertile mind, Governor Chittenden persuaded him to go to Europe and make purchases of sufficient arms for the supply, having failed to obtain them in America.

Consequently Mr. Allen, in 1796, went first to England and subsequently to France, purchased in Paris 20,000 stand of arms with bayonets, and 24 brass four pound field pieces, and embarked with these in the Olive Branch for New York, November, 1796. The vessel was captured by a British seventy-four, the Audacious, and carried into England under pretence that the arms were designed for a rebellion in Ireland. General Allen prosecuted his captors, both in the admiralty court and court of Kings Bench with all that vigor and determination for which he was noted. Year after year the contest went on, the wilful Judge demanding that Mr. Allen should prove the arms *were not* designed for the purposes alleged, rather than that the holders should prove their allegation. The arms were rusting and of course becoming worthless. In four years all that had been obtained even by crossing the Channel and the Atlantic for evidence, was to get the property released on bail. The arms were then consigned to Messers Bird, Savage and Bird, of London, who according to our phrase were the receipters. In about three years from their consignment, this firm failed and the consignment with their other effects went into bankruptcy. Then, after they were forever lost to the claimant they were magnanimously released by the court. By these means he was defrauded not only of the purchase, but his expenses and near ten years of time.



During his absence abroad his lands were seized upon by speculators, and every means resorted to, to divert it from him, that ingenuity could invent. On one occasion his wife was offered \$100,000.00 if she would give up the title deeds, his enemies politely intimating that that, with the town of Irasburgh which she held in her own right would be quite sufficient for her family. This long litigation in expensive courts, the cost of which it was decided he should pay, together with the losses at home and the entire purchase, seriously involved his estate, which before was very ample. Therefore it is safe to say this *marriage settlement* alluded to, saved the town to the family, or to Mrs. Allen, the sole proprietor at that time. When these facts became apparent it was plain that some means must be resorted to to make Irasburgh of some value to the owner. As Mr. Allen had been for a long time absent, men came in and squatted upon them where ever they pleased, with the exception of a few who sought a legal title to their homestead. The people were then poor, money to any large amount could not be raised, and Mrs. Allen resorted to leases as the most favorable for the inhabitants, commencing in some instances with five cents and increasing until the sum should reach seventeen cents per acre. In this way a *poor* man could come at once into possession of a farm, and all the inconvenience it could ever be to him would be the difficulty of paying over the interest on about three cents per acre instead of owning the right of soil. The grantor became a perpetual creditor. At the same time the promise was held out and even the notice posted up in handbills and published in newspapers, that any man should have the privilege of paying the 17 shillings per acre, the amount of the lease, any time within 10 years from its date and receiving the fee simple of his land. This course therefore was not resorted to as a matter of choice to the grantor, (as every man bought his lands who was able and chose so to do), but as a boon to the grantees. It was the same as selling them the lands and then lending the money for payment, taking a mortgage redeemable in 10 years.

The first lease recorded was to Amos Conant, August 4, A. D. 1802, and the 2d to Jeremiah Morrill, the 20th of October following. This process of conveyance was continued interspersed with an occasional sale, until there are now 60 lots of which Mr. Allen holds the lease, and 50 have been sold, out of 210 which



the town contained originally. So that really less than one third of the lots in town have been leased by the Allen family up to this date.

After Irasburgh became the shire town of the county, its progress, though slow, was steady, and improvement certain. Men of intelligence and cultivation came in, education was not forgotten and the people were not behind their neighbors in their appreciation of civil institutions. There are at this time eleven school districts in town, several of which have new, commodious, tasty and comparatively new school edifices, creditable to their builders and hopeful for the future. The court house erected in 1816, becoming somewhat old for its uses and behind the times for its accommodations, was sold to the town for a town house, and a comfortable and tasty edifice took its place, the expense being met by the inhabitants of the town. This was A. D. 1847. Previously, *i. e.*, about 1840, the Jail was rebuilt, which, although it is not deficient in the department of strength, is no great credit to the taste or skill of architects. In 1852 one tier of lots of 160 rods in breadth was set off from the east part of Lowell to the west part of Irasburgh, making it now, in that part, a town of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length. The present year (A. D. 1856) a new Jail house has been erected under the supervision of Messers. Worthington, Carpenter, and Kellam, giving altogether a different aspect to that locality from what it bore previously.

Otherwise the modern history of the town furnishes few incidents sufficiently striking to interest any but their actors. As I said, there are 60 lots of leased land. Still, good judges and intelligent men inform me that on investigation the lands in town are less incumbered than several of the best towns north of them, notwithstanding the prejudice against them connected with leases.

The Orleans County Bank established at Irasburgh was chartered in 1832, with a capital of \$60,000.00. It has a prosperous history and was rechartered, 1849. Its present capital is \$50,000.00 all paid in. Its circumstances are now prosperous and hopeful. President Elijah Cleveland, Cashier Isaac N. Cashman, Directors, E. Cleveland, Ira H. Allen, Sabin Kellam, Thomas Gild and Amos Robinson.

Near the close of the past year a long low building like the low black schooners we read of in the West Indies was reared up in



the rear of all other buildings in the place called a ball alley, and is the latest improvement in the place (the latest improvement, or misimprovement which has come to my knowledge) built by some of the authorities of the county with the expressed assent of many principal citizens and the connivance of some professed Christians. Through this may be expected a rapid improvement in certain sciences.

I hardly dare to close this lecture without adding a word to the inhabitants of Irasburgh. You have a fine productive, easily tilled country, feasible and profitable. Would it not be well to receive the Spartan maxim, "Improve, adorn, seek no farther"? I have alluded to the one great draw back and have endeavored to show that that exists rather in sound than substance. But however that be, if it ever be an obstacle to your progress, be not therefore less energetic or hopeful. But rise superior to all obstacles and show by your enterprise and zeal that of those difficulties you cannot remove, with good health and the Smile of God you can overcome them.

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